

THE MEASURE

A JOURNAL OF POETRY



Poems by Carl Sandburg, Richard Aldington,
Edna Worthley Underwood, Raymond Holden,
Jessica Nelson North, and Others - - - -

Between Caliban and the Seraph, by Joseph Auslander

Reviews of H. D.'s Hymen and Robert Nathan

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Hoof Dusk

THE dusk of this box wood
is leather gold, buckskin gold,
and the hoofs of a dusk goat
leave their heel marks on it.

The cover of this wooden box
is a last-of-the-sunset red,
a red with a sandman sand
fixed in evening siftings—
late evening sands are here.

The gold of old clocks,
forgotten in garrets,
hidden out between battles
of long wars and short wars,
the smoldering ember gold
of old clocks found again—
here is the small smoke fadeout
of their slow loitering.

Feel me with your fingers,
measure me in fire and wind:
maybe I am buckskin gold, old clock gold,
late evening sunset sand—

Let go
and loiter
in the smoke fadeout.

Fins

PLOW over bars of sea plowing,
the moon by moon work of the sea,
the plowing, sand and rock, must be done.

Ride over, ride over bars of sea riding,
the sun and the blue riding of the sea—
sit in the saddles and say it, sea riders.

Slant up and go, silver breakers; mix
the high howls of your dancing; shoot
your laugh of rainbow foam tops.

Foam wings, fly; pick the comers, the fin pink,
the belly green, the blue rain sparks, the
white wave spit—fly, you foam wings.

The men of the sea are gone to work; the women
of the sea are off buying new hats, combs, clocks;
it is rust and gold on the roofs of the sea.

Carl Sandburg

Improvisations from Old Paintings on Silk

A COURT SCENE

I LOVE the blondness of old painted silk,
Like pure and patient pearls of yellow glow;
The tiny figures colored like to gems,
Fresh colors, sweet as childhood, with its lure,
(The intertwining of a tinted fugue).

Slight accents, wisely placed, of black—rich—deep—
The eloquence, perhaps, of pulseless things
The years have ripened to the tone of fruit.

LAING K'AI

THE flying battle splendor of the rain
Upon these hills today
Is resonant as any bronze of Han.

The little temple bells are dulled with sleep.
They sound far—far away
Far—far away

The slanting temple roofs are all ashine.

BLACK AND WHITE

A WATER fowl in winter, blotted rich
Against a distance of fine, falling snow.
Long legs! Starred feet!
Cut sharp with bold, black lines.
Black, jagged row of reeds! Black, thin, spiked bill!

The emphasis of Wagner's trumpet-blasts
Which cut the midnight of Germanic myth
Flung head-long from a heaven of lightning height.

OLD SUNG PAINTING

FOUR quails are nesting where the autumn calls,
As richly brown as furs and nuts are brown.

Long, sapless leaves lean out to call the sun
Across a grey immensity.

The gold of perished summer, steeped and dull,
Is penciled on their plumes,
Fat, sensuous throats,
And in their eyes that saw the harvest fields.

Edna Worthley Underwood

The Month of Seeds

I HAVE most secret business with the Spring.
This winter long,
Out of a page, a dream, a list, a song,
Glints of old gardens like a turning wing,
I have stored plots against our double need.
Now with the earthy hands that sped the seed
Blessing the levelled boxes with their pegs—
High as a riding gipsy with a moon,
Rapt as an Indian with his April reed,
Sure as a woodduck over warming eggs,
I wait on June.

I have most secret business with the Spring.

Dare Stark

Papillons

(At the Ballet.)

I

WHAT phantasm of the heart of men
So whitely and so wanly
Gibes at us?

II

Fool!
Had your heart the warmth
That burns in the thin candle-heart
You had not lost her.

III

White—
As one who trembles at her scorn—
You ask for treachery.

Be red, be blood-red, brother,
And she'll not dare
To dance to other colder lips than yours.

Freedom

AT last, after years, I am saturated
With pity and agony and tears;
At last I have reached indifference;
Now I am almost free—
A gold pellet of sunlight
Dropped, curling, into green water.

The grass, which is one with our flesh
And bends like an old man
Back to the mould, their mother,
Beckons with long fingers
The poplar-nymphs and white-ash dryads
To caress their pale feet dancing,
Weightless, pale and immortal.

The dead may be myriad
But my nostrils are sweet with crushed leaves,
My eyes clear as flowers,
My hands stainless;
About me is opulent light,
That drenches the lightless sea,
Piercing the shadowy windless places
Where sea-moss fringes quiet pebbles.

Over harsh slopes the centaurs gallop
With whistling manes, a rattle of hoofs;
White shapes rustle the dew-dripping thickets;
Slim fauns dance by the grass track.
I have passed through hate and pity,
Desire and anguish, to this:
I am myself,
I am free.

Richard Aldington

An Ancient Hindu Sings

THE palaces are sealed with dust. . . .
This is a miracle that I
Follow the river flowing by
Untouched by torches in the rust
Of coming night . . . and live to sing. . . .

Now light falls from no window-eye;
No foot-sound of the passers-by
Scatters these silences that cling
Like cobwebs to the minarets. . . .
Fall, darkness, from the parapets.

*O fall and quench this lonely sound,
This shard of pain beneath the dusk.
No pigeon hobbles on the roof,
No dog turns to a darker street;
There is no sound here but my voice. . . .*

There is no bell left to rejoice
That I am cursed without a prayer;
And I have wandered, seeking proof,
Through the last-fallen temple's husk,
Of the last gods that bartered there.

Fail, fail, draw out thy hand of heat
From the dark river and this beat
Of aching and despairing time,
West-fallen sun . . . the shallow rhyme
Of star with star is less to bear.

Where is there one to ask of this,—
That I am here acursed with song?—
Remembering the last sad throng
Godless and helpless, wondering . . .
I who have known it live and sing. . . .

*Let noon tomorrow be the flame
To take my shadow for its kiss;
Let there be mist when evening hears
Thy river . . . and no chords of shame,
O golden breeder of the years!*

George O'Neil

Fantasio

AS Night like a black flower shuts the sun within its petals of gloom,
The silent road crosses the sleeping valley like a winding dream—
While the whole region has succumbed under the weight of a primeval
silence.

The mountains like mighty giants lift themselves with a regal haughtiness
out of the ruling gloom.

With their broad rocky shoulders menacing the starred heavens.

Across the dim jagged distances are pearl-gray wings flitting
Flitting—

The moonlight is a hailstorm of splendor

Pattering on the velvet floor of gloom—

The moon!

The moon is a faint memory of a lost sun—

The moon is a footprint that the Sun has left on pathless heaven!

Pearl-gray wings are whirling distantly—

Whirling!

A fever of youth streams through my being

Trembling under the incantation of Beauty,

Like a turmoil of purple butterflies caught in a web of light.

A black foam of darkness overflows from the rim of night,

And floods away the pearl-gray wings!

Pascal D'Angelo

Epithalamium

A CROSS the sky a flight of burning dust.
The air grips at me as I stand
Held to the wild earth's whirling crust
By power that works through foot and lifted hand.
Swiftly the shoulders of the hills lift against the stars,
Swiftly they rise and cross the moon's face.
I hold tightly to the pasture bars
And plant my feet upon this grassy place
And close my eyes to close the sense that mars
My motion through the circle of the sky,
Through wind and fire which I am governed by.
Over my head the night stands like a sea
And the stars rock and dip among the waves.
Like water the flood of life sweeps over me
From wing that stirs and grass that paves.
Even the peaks that pierce heaven with their flying
Shudder with strength and splendor in their places.
Nothing is dead. Nothing is even dying.
Life leaps like fire from all things, all faces.
So in the night I stand, my body bearing
Fiercely and blindly in its inmost vein
The secret power of the last star's staring,
The passion of the moon for fields of grain,
The anguish of all hunger and all pain;
The blessed burden which gives life to life,
The beauty which a man takes shape to hold,
The breath which blows through bodies like a knife,
The seed a man is moisture to unfold.
And all these things, as all the studded skies
Spread moon and star, I pour from out my heart
Because of hands which have torn wide apart
Great stony dykes once raised against surprise
Which kept my soul from navigable waves
Racing cold corridors as dark as graves.
Oh, radiant Wonder! Oh, touched Being! I turn
Not from this window opening out of me

In fear, but with unlidded eyes that burn
In image of imagined destiny
I reach in darkness for your holy hands
To touch and so feel something taking form
Here where this mortal measure of me stands,
A joy to blow me wise with splendid storm.
If there is any aim or end to this
Great outward surging of stirred blood and bone
In such a nearness of your spirit there is
More perfect sense than men have ever known
Of where it lies and how a man may go
Forever in its way. This then you are.
How shall I say—be glad—to you who know
More fierce strong things of beauty than any star
Knows of the upper air? How shall I speak
When speech is only a kissing of the hems
Of that toward which the dawns of your eyes break,
Toward which you rise as flowers rise on stems?
Oh, Beautiful! I am no longer young.
Now from the gentle breast of your wise being
I lift my head and open eyes for seeing.
I clamber down from that to which I clung.
I take on stature and with stature grow
Humble that I have fed upon you so.
Across the sky a flight of burning dust.
The air grips at me as I stand
Held to the wild earth's whirling crust
By power that works through foot and lifted hand.
Oh, lift your face and give my lips your mouth!
The wind of Summer sings from the starred South.
Forgive me what I was when winds were West.
Straining the blossomed throbbing of your breast
Against my leaping heart I feel the give
Of wild earth riding onward, fiercely whirled,
I see the vivid sun, I see the world
Beyond men's brains where love may learn to live.

Raymond Holden

The Grey Woman

THERE was a house on the dunes
Where the grey sand drifted
And the wind blew lonesome tunes
Through a knothole in the door;
The grey sand sifted
Deeper and deeper on the floor
Until foot touched the wood no more.

The grey house-woman
Gnarled as a cedar on a sandy hill
Had been and been there still
As far back as memory goes;
Some told whisperings of ill
But no one knew and no one knows
Where she came from nor why she came
Nor what had been her human name.
She never baked, she never swept,
She never made a garden-patch,
She never talked as neighbors talk
And no friend's hand was on her latch;
And some folk said she never slept
Because the fishermen saw her walk
At dawn across the sandy hill
And saw her candle burning still.

Long ago I left that place
And I think she must be dead;
But if she died, she died alone,
And there she shrivels, bone by bone
Covered with sand from feet to head—
Covered with grey sand drifted
Over her hands, over her face,
And the grey sand is never lifted.

Words

I MAY turn over in my mind
All words with infinite delight,
Repeat the loveliest that I find
Before I go to sleep at night;
But yellow flowers in the grass
Or purple shade of laden trees,
Or the delight that comes to pass
When I remember these;
The smell of red earth after rain
Or the clean taste of morning bread—
To make these actual again
Words are too thin, words are too dead.

Lydia Gibson

Old Worker

SHE who once was slave to clocks
Huddles at her dingy sill
And dreams and rocks.
Noises beat along the slum
Till the air is bruised and heavy
With their drum.
Once that throbbing woke her ire;
Plucked her nerves and made them twang
Like thin wire.
Then one day she smiled, grew mute,
Let the kindly heel of time
Crack the lute.
Now she rocks beside her sill
And dreams of water whispering
To an old mill.

Mildred Plew Merryman

A Sumerian Cycle

I

AFTER the rains a crescent of sweet grass
 Bending toward Sumer.
After the rains
The green-white pool that ripples to the gourd,
After black skies and walls of beaten clay,
Thy arms, O Siva.

II

Tell me, O Soul, would any wise man say,
Would any beggar, loafing by his wineskin
Say
That love like ours was not enough for him?

The little tree has dropped its ripest fig
Into your bosom.

III

Incense twelve times breathed is a pain
Keen to the nostrils.
There is no help for us in all of Sumer.
Though they should feast us, Siva, in every hall,
There is no help. The clear pool sickens
To our throats. The grass is rooted
In weariness.

IV

Out of the south the nomads come like locusts,
Sharp eyes in dusty faces,
Sharp hooves of desert cattle,
Their rags twitter in the hot wind
Like locusts in the harvest.

Shall we fear them, O thou whom I see no longer
Through the veil of my surfeiting
That has covered thy face?

After the nomads
The rains.

Jessica Nelson North.

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ACTING EDITOR: CAROLYN HALL

ASSISTANT EDITOR: GEORGE O'NEIL

Between Caliban and the Seraph

"IT is not the poet's business," declares Flecker in a peculiarly brilliant preface, "to save man's soul, but to make it worth saving." I like to think on that declaration because, amid the aching cacophonies, the flagellant gestures, the welters of mud and amazement characteristic of so much that takes the name of poetry in vain, it has the cadence of bronze, the untroubled clarity of silver. I like to say that sentence aloud because, in the desperate confusion of the groping for songhood when our poets are being heckled on the one hand by the "Professional Hounds of Heaven," on the other by the howlers in the pit, it lifts the valid and articulate voice from the whirlwind: The poet's business is not to save man's soul, nor to kick it overboard—both frantic futilities—but more than ever to create the beauty which begets beauty.

Complete poetic disarmament is tragically intolerable. We can scrap those standards which have grown obsolete; we can make unto ourselves new graven images—and promptly forget them: but we cannot write Whim on the lintel of our doorposts and expect our poetry to survive that whim; we cannot perpetrate a vagabondage of vehemence, go off on a lyric "bat," without incurring the penalty of the law. And that law is something outside and above our manifestos, our "hunches," our schools; it is neither credo nor ritual; it is the inescapable criterion of

beauty to which we must refer the darling of our bosom for judgment. It can bend without stooping; yield without breaking. It is the variable constant.

And it is never the vehicle of slogan. It repudiates both an aesthetic hedonism and a revolting naturalism. Recognizing the fatality of the cliché, the clique, the purely—or impurely—private, it is eternally and passionately dedicated to that generous, ardent, interminable fulfilment of itself which constitutes the permanence and the power of all true art.

Surely there is, as there always has been and will have to be, some golden mid-way between Caliban and the Seraph. Poetry can get along beautifully, can achieve a humming and luminous motion, without a drop of treacle and the-flowers-that-bloom-in-the-spring-tra-la. Nor, for the mewing of his mighty youth, need the poet indulge the glorification of garbage, slink in the back alleys, gesticulate in a sort of rhythmized vacuity over ash-cans filled with moonlight.

Composition instead of decomposition; form instead of formula—not, let us observe, the form which is dead shell, rigor mortis: rather and solely that form which is the poem's own imperious, yet infinitely, individually plastic, unfolding in accordance with its essential destiny, precisely as the cocoon dictates the moth, the moth the cocoon.

If the "Original Genius" will but refuse to vegetate like an onion; refuse to thump the heavenly dulcimer: in short, if he will but refuse to be either "Original" or a "Genius," and be simply and steadily himself, the poet—feeling, feeling keenly; working, working, working hard; exercising the veto function with discrimination, with cordial severity and frequency; making of standards neither shelf nor pedestal; exploring without exploiting; subjecting his poetry to a saner mercy than that of his diaphragm; resisting the exquisite temptation to paste scraps from his dossier—or some one else's—all over it—by God, he will help our puny souls! The rest matters nothing. What he calls a spade is nobody's business but his own; what he omits to call it is everybody's business—and pleasure. It is that part of a poem which is left out that makes it worth reading. For the shaper has been at work; the chips, the dust, the débris have been swept out of sight: and now the thing faces us and we fill our eyes with beauty.

Joseph Auslander

Youth in Perspective

Youth Grows Old, by Robert Nathan. Robert M. McBride & Co., N. Y.

MANY poets would be glad, I think, if they had used a different system of naming the poems in their first books of verse—if they had written the poems as poets and then stood off and named them as onlookers, as appraising and perspectived persons, as, in fact, super-poets, tolerant gods. Thus would the curse of immaturity be taken off many a "first book." Nor would such humor belittle the verses, but rather give them a significance, a bit of eternalness, which they otherwise must almost always lack. Robert Nathan, one gathers from reading his book, has waited long enough for publication of his first book of poems to choose naturally this detached form of title which sees the poet as typical rather than individual, which links up things as they seemed to him with things as they are, or as, more exactly, they have always seemed.

In getting these poems ready for publication, Mr. Nathan has swept away the titles which they must have borne before, and woven a connected narrative along the page-tops in comment of what lies below. Thus, "the poet thinks how beauty forever escapes the lonely heart . . . and because he is still a young man, speculates on death. He endeavors to console himself . . . by thinking that spring, tho' fled, will return. He feels himself near his love . . . but hurries by. He hears the sound of distant bells . . . and wonders when his journey will end." Perhaps this running narrative is the greatest poem in the book; at any rate it brings us closest to that Robert Nathan whom we have wished to meet again, who wrote *Autumn* with its so remarkable detachment, its delicate etching in of vast and quiet mass, its typifying of man and nature.

Autumn lifted itself, with a single unconscious and unswerving soar, above the quirks of individual psychology to the unchanging relationships of man with earth. And if it were not for this narrative titling of the new book, which gives us again, in simplicity and pitifulness, the picture of man—any man—at futile and wondering grips with the universe, this book might be a disappointment. For there seems little doubt that these poems were all written before *Autumn*. It is a book slight in workmanship, in width, in wisdom. Loveliness is here, but it might be only the loveliness of that first lyric period which comes to all men, even to poets. Sadness is here, but it might be only that sadness of youth which only the years can quench. There is nothing in it comparable to the poetry and

the magic of that hour when, behind a cobwebbed window of the barn, the old schoolmaster made a doll's house for the child, or of that noonday when the girl looked out over the rain-gray fields and knew life was sad.

And yet there is something in the book which defies disappointment, something which convinces one almost against one's will that this loveliness, this sadness, is authentic; the titling makes us sure that this is so. Prose and poetry are variants of the same, and the same quality, however, differing in degree, is in both books. And although it is entirely possible that this will be his last as well as his first book of verse, and that all his other poems will be done in prose, Robert Nathan is essentially a poet.

Louise Townsend Nicholl

"Temple Music"

Hymen, by H. D., Henry Holt and Company: New York.

"THE music, with its deep chanting notes, dies away. The curtain hangs motionless in rich, full folds. Then from this background of darkness, dignity and solemn repose, a flute gradually detaches itself, becomes clearer and clearer, pipes alone one shrill, simple little melody."

So runs a paragraph of the stage directions in the masque of *Hymen*, characterizing at once the masque and the whole volume of H. D.'s poetry. It is temple music; the instruments are wood-wind, flutes and oboes played monotonously, intricately and clearly, in an atmosphere of sacrifice and shadowy columns. The smooth shriek of catgut would be out of place here, the lion's purr of the drums would shatter the fabric. Brass is inconceivable in the same province. When H. D. sings of sunlight or the sea the effect is of a priestess referring wistfully to the pleasures of the world.

There was more pagan ecstasy in the earlier book, but it was the ecstasy of a neophyte on a holiday, gone mad with a larger ration of beauty than usual, the ecstasy, too, of a temperament incapable of calm enjoyment. There is no mean in her poems between iron brooding and the top of the bent. She is not only a Greek but an attendant at the altar.

Her form is fitting. The unrhymed three-stressed line, employed by Arnold to suit similar moods in *Rugby Chapel* and *The Strayed Reveller*, has narrowed her scope while sharpening her technique and images. It is hard to read much of it together because of the lack of long sweep in the phrasing; also she seems to have written it out to the edge. But she is a poet with real achievement to her credit; no other has etched a personality so deeply on the current surface of things.

Maxwell Anderson.

Contributors

CARL SANDBURG is too well known to need an introduction. His third volume of poetry, *Slabs of the Sunburnt West*, will be out in May.

EDNA WORTHLEY UNDERWOOD has travelled extensively but is at present in New York. She is a language scholar and has written a number of books.

DARE STARK is a graduate of Stanford University who lives in San Rafael, California. She was born in South Africa and is named after one of its rivers. During and just after the war she was secretary to Mrs. Herbert Hoover.

RICHARD ALDINGTON, as everyone knows, was one of the first English Imagistes. Recently he has been writing more prose than poetry.

PASCAL D'ANGELO cannot be described in a sentence. He is a pick and shovel poet who was born near Sulmona in Italy above the garden of Ovid, and has been in this country, a laborer, for twelve years. He is ragged and poor but the fire of creating is in him. His poetry is just beginning to be known.

RAYMOND HOLDEN, who has lately returned from several months in Paris, was born in New York. He is now a resident of Franconia, N. H. His poems have appeared sporadically in magazines since 1917.

**STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC.,
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State of New York, { ss.
County of New York, {

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Carolyn Hall, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that she is the business manager of The Measure, A Journal of Poetry, and that the following is, to the best of her knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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2. That the owners are: (Give names and addresses of individual owners, or, if a corporation, give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of the total amount of stock.)

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3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: (If there are none, so state.)

None.

CAROLYN HALL, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 16th day of March, 1922.

JAMES W. JENNINGS.

(My commission expires March 30, 1923.)

The Measure

A Journal of Poetry

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